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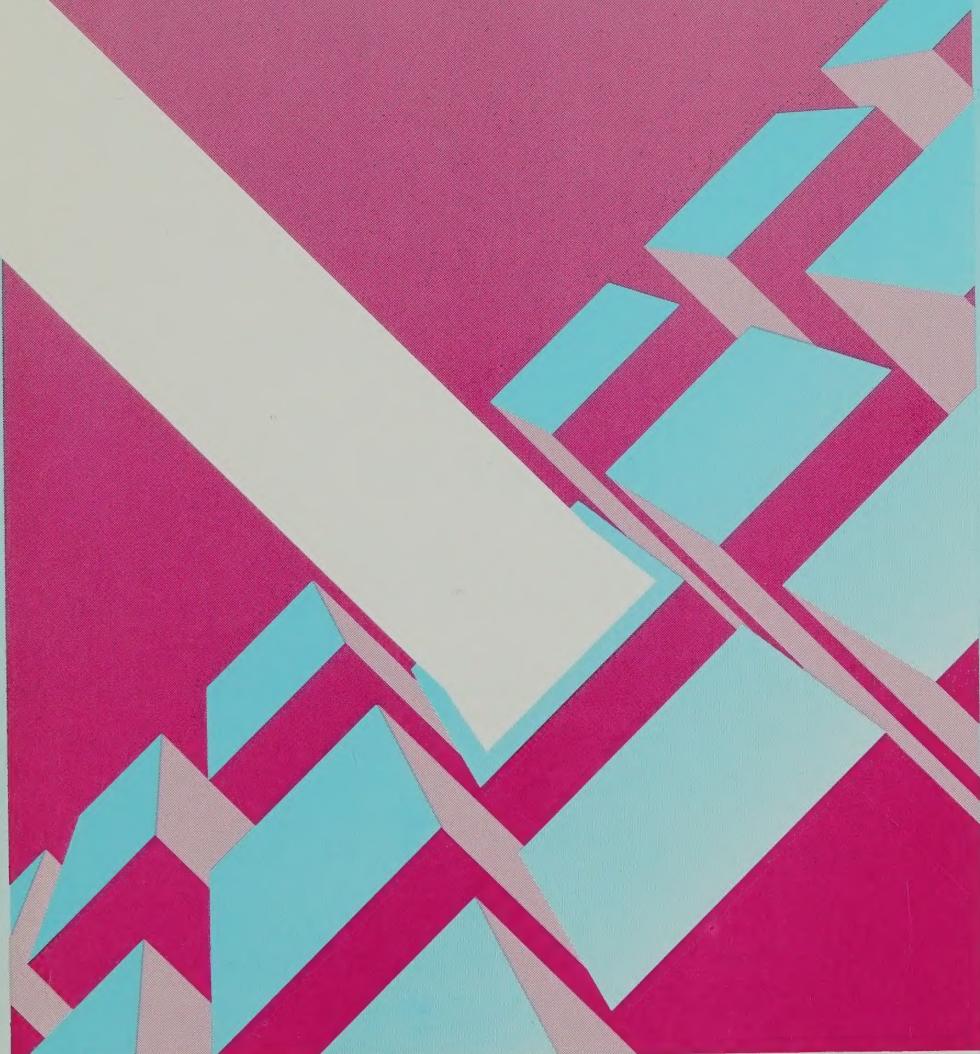


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Youth Psychopedagogical Profiles and International Development Education



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Youth Psychopedagogical Profiles and International Development Education

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1991



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Foreword

The Development Information Program of the Canadian International Development Agency has collaborated with the National Film Board of Canada to create a joint program, called MEDIA-SPHERE, which produces publications and films for Canadian youth. The purpose of the program is to inform young people, to get them thinking, to train them to analyze situations, to encourage them to seek innovative solutions to global problems and to help them become world citizens who are aware of the role they must play.

MEDIA-SPHERE also produces materials for educators¹ to help them in their efforts to make young people more aware of global issues and international development. This publication was prepared for educators who are interested in development education and who wish to help young people learn more about developing countries and gain a clearer understanding of global issues. Prepared by a team of educational experts from the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa, it defines the main principles on which MEDIA-SPHERE's development information activities are based, and outlines the psychopedagogical profiles of the various age groups.

The users of MEDIA-SPHERE's films and publications will find in this document valuable information on how to implement or adapt various development-related educational activities.

¹ Throughout this document, the term "educator" is meant in its broadest sense (parent, teacher, group leader, etc.), and all expressions referring to persons include both genders unless otherwise specified.

Development education

Definition

Development education aims to open a window on the world — not in the sense of conquest, but rather to develop a greater sense of sharing. It goes beyond learning to understanding and appreciation of the events and realities of the modern world. We use the term “appreciation” in its generic sense, to indicate an evaluation or value judgment of someone or something. No one can remain indifferent to what is happening on this planet; development education is therefore education about respect for differences, about dialogue of cultures and civilizations, in short, education about humanity.

For this, development education must begin with the individual’s most immediate everyday experiences at home, at school, in the workplace, and in the community, gradually broadening to include other, more distant realities. Change in the individual brought about by the educational process must be rooted in the affective or emotional, must be the outcome of reflection, and must be more than merely informational or cognitive in nature. This change must also become apparent through action in some form of solidarity.

Some principles

Development education is based on the following basic principles:

- Development education is not confined to certain precise areas of knowledge; it is interdisciplinary. In this sense, it is a field that transcends and encompasses the other disciplines.

- Development education is gradual, personal learning that progresses from awareness to action. It transforms rather than forms the individual. The developing world ceases to be an abstract concept; it is integrated and experienced by the individual and actualized through less ethnocentric, more idealistic behavior.
- Development education must not only inform; it must also be a new way of looking at the world and its development. It challenges the family, the teacher, the student, the adult and the community to examine judgments, attitudes, values and knowledge. Thus, development education is a forum for comparing analyses and interpretations to allow critical thinking to develop. It is the learning of participation, questioning and open-mindedness. It must, however, be more than mere understanding through common sense or theoretical explanations; it must lead to acts of solidarity through the development of positive attitudes.
- Development education aims to develop a critical sense, lead to a demand for justice and eliminate the fear of exposing the roots of misdevelopment.
- Development education is education for change on a personal level, and is based on conceptions of the meaning of life. Any change in attitude progresses through three stages: enhanced or new knowledge (the cognitive stage), leading to new attitudes, new ways of seeing things (the affective stage), and translating into new ways of doing things (the behavioral stage).
- Development education must adopt a global approach to reality by bringing together “them” and “us”. It must not focus solely on the developing countries, but on the development of all cultures and all nations. It explores the global us. The main difficulty associated with this principle is learning to control our vision, inevitably clouded with ethnocentrism.

- Development education must approach the aspects of the human reality in terms of differences rather than qualitative comparisons. It cannot be neutral, apologist or moralistic; it must, if it is to be authentic, be both critical and realistic.
- The main challenge of development education lies in drawing a connection between distant reality and everyday concerns without lapsing into ethnocentrism, moralizing, or academic or cognitive comparisons.

These principles to some extent form the philosophical foundation of development education as conveyed through MEDIA-SPHERE material. It is difficult to avoid ethnocentrism, as we are all both the product and the authors of a culture. However, the realization of this is already a good basis for effecting change.

Psychopedagogical profiles and their implications for the activities

The characteristics briefly presented here are essentially indicative and are in no way intended to be exhaustive. They should be regarded as parameters to guide the development education activities. They correspond roughly to the age group in question.

I. Psychopedagogical characteristics of childhood (ages 6-11)

Note: Because of the many variations in the growth and development of children between the ages of 6 and 11, the psychopedagogical characteristics for ages 6 to 8 and for ages 9 to 11 are discussed separately.

A. Ages 6-8

1. Main characteristics

Very concrete view of things: At this age, the child thinks and reflects in very concrete terms, relying on what he can touch, see and hear. His thinking reflects his need to be and remain in contact with whatever is offered to him.

Considerable handling of objects: Since he perceives reality in a very concrete way, at this age the child takes great pleasure in handling objects. He likes to weigh, touch, place, turn and grasp objects. It is at this point that his perception of things begins to evolve.

Limited attention span: Because of his direct perception of things, the young child cannot focus his attention for very long on any one task. He is not yet able to think ahead, because his thinking is concerned mainly with what is at hand and the present.

Immediacy of emotions: The child's emotions are intense, visible and readily perceptible. The child is able to react to everything that goes on around him. His sensibility is very superficial. Any disruption in his environment provokes in him emotional responses of joy, sadness, pleasure, and so on. The ego has not yet developed appropriate mechanisms for dealing in a fully acceptable way with the frustrations of the outside world.

Closeness of emotional, social, physical relationships: The child is in touch with his emotions and sensitive to his relationships with the people and objects of his immediate surroundings. He reacts at once to the quality of emotional, social or physical relationships. A warm welcome has an effect on him, as does indifference. The child is very sensitive to the moods of others. His sensitivity is keen. This fragile dimension of the child should therefore be respected.

Sense of morals based on obedience and punishment: For the child in this age group, the rightness or wrongness of behavior is judged by the consequences it has. When making moral judgments, he is not yet capable of evaluating the overall situation or the intention behind an action. Right and wrong are also seen in terms of behavior which meets the child's needs or the needs of others, and thus in terms of the consequences of the behavior for the child.

Very sensitive to shapes, colors, etc.: The child is immediately drawn to shapes and colors. He is very receptive to this type of stimulation, and is fascinated by motion.

Need for immediate reinforcement: The child is generally impatient and does not like to wait for gratification. He needs immediate reinforcement of his activities and actions. This is no whim, but a need. He wants and demands immediate gratification. The adult must indicate to the child appreciation or disapproval. This immediate reinforcement often enables the child to carry on with something that interests him. His motivation is often conditional upon whether or not he is told that what he is doing is appreciated.

Very limited ability to project in time: He is still very much in touch with his emotions, focused on the concrete and preoccupied with the handling of objects. The child's capacity to project in time is limited. He perceives and thinks of time in terms of days and weeks. He sees everything in concrete terms, and the future is still beyond his understanding. For the child, time is what is happening now. This characteristic is very important, for at this stage, planning is beyond the child's mental grasp.

Limited ability to concentrate: Because the child is not yet able to distance himself from his surroundings, his concentration is direct but short-lived. He needs variety, change and movement from one thing to another. He cannot be expected to concentrate for long periods.

2. *Implications of these characteristics for the activities*

- The development education activities should take into account the concrete nature of the child's thinking at this age. This means the child has a need to see, touch, hear, and so on and that contact with the activity is necessary.
- The activity should be very brief. Several brief activities are preferable to one sustained activity.
- The activity should take into account the fact that the child is very much in touch with his emotions. Nothing shocking should be introduced at this stage.
- The activity should have a certain warmth to it. This means that the human relationship should be an integral part of the proposed activity.
- The activity should be presented in a gentle and subtle way; the child will then realize that he is being looked after and that he is important.

- The activity should acknowledge any emotions that emerge in the child. Opportunities for expressing emotion should be seized, but dealt with subtly and considerately.
- Emphasize the consequences of the participants' actions, and show how they can do harm without really intending to. If progress is to be made with this age group, the activities must illustrate the advantages of a more developed world and the importance of certain conventions and rules governing relationships between individuals and societies (next level).

B. Ages 9-11

1. *Main characteristics*

Development of abstract intelligence: At this age, the intellect can operate to an increasing extent without concrete materials. This means that, in his dealings with the physical and social environment, the child is capable of performing concrete operations of increasing complexity, leading to the early stages of abstraction. At first, however, this detachment from concrete concepts is only slight, and the child quickly returns to physical objects to consolidate his position. He still needs concrete points of reference to establish connections between objects, events and people; he cannot think entirely in abstract terms yet.

More aware of the significance of others for him: His perception becomes more acute and clear. He soon realizes the significance of his relationship with others, particularly adults.

Very sociable with peers of the same sex: The child is very sociable with peers of the same sex. He readily interacts and is at ease. His relationships are easy-going and pleasant. He enjoys group play and is not hesitant to make a lot of friends. His social relationships are very warm and very gratifying.

Possible distrust of some people: At this age, the child is sociable, but must not be betrayed. He may develop distrust if he senses resistance in another, particularly an adult. This means he believes in the honesty of the relationship and the other person must be accepted by him. He is sensitive to this reality. This also means he demands to be treated the same as others his age.

Sense of morals based on convention: Gradually, right and wrong come to be defined in terms of how they are interpreted by the majority. The child bases his moral behavior on his need to please others. He also takes intentions into account when making moral judgments. This need to be in agreement morally with others leads to moral judgments in which conformance to authority and rules takes precedence over individual rights.

Longer attention span: At this stage, the child's attention can be held for a longer period. He is able to focus on a task that interests him and stay with it longer.

Very industrious: At this age, the child has many projects. He wants and likes to do all sorts of things. His imagination is keen and alert. This finds expression in all kinds of plans which he enjoys acting on. He is able to busy himself, amuse himself and play on his own. He is rarely bored, for he has a lot of energy and is becoming aware of it. Moreover, he responds very well to any projects he is given. He tries to do what is required, and more.

Sustained concentration: When something interests him, the child in this age group is much more capable of concentrating and applying himself for a longer period. However, he must see the significance of what he is doing and his interest must be engaged. His motivation is more prolonged and consistent. He is also able to begin to follow more closely the unfolding of a situation, an event, even a thought.

Delayed gratification: Being able to concentrate and apply himself for longer periods of time, the child has less need for immediate gratification. He is more patient. He understands the meaning of expressions such as "later" and "at the right time, in the right place".

Bodily awareness: At this stage, the child, particularly a girl, begins to realize the importance of the bodily dimension. This is not yet a dimension that consumes all of the child's energies, but signs of preoccupation with the body begin to appear. The child discovers that this reality will become something very important in her life; she wonders a great deal about it.

Ability to perceive and make distinctions: His intellectual development enables him to identify, compare and distinguish objects, people and events far more clearly. Moreover, he enjoys doing so. Gradually, the child becomes more critical towards his environment, an interesting development once the child sets about making real distinctions between objects and people.

2. *Implications of these characteristics for the activities*

- The development education activities should take into account the connections the child is able to draw between objects and events.
- The activities should provide opportunities for comparisons to be made between objects, situations and people.
- The activities should also call for the completion of small projects. At this age, the child likes to undertake and pursue an activity.
- Above all, the activities may be in the form of questions. At this stage, questions fascinate the child and he is able to devote considerable energy to finding the answers.

- The activities should involve people. Social interaction is very important at this age. The child likes to know people and learn more about them.
- The activities should take into account the fact that between the ages of 9 and 11, the child quickly grasps the nature of the relationship an individual wishes to establish with him. This reality must not be ignored.

II. Psychopedagogical characteristics of early adolescence (ages 12-15)

1. Main characteristics

Emergence of formal thought: The young adolescent is beginning to detach his thinking from concrete concepts and develop arguments based on propositions. He is now able to put forward hypotheses to explain certain facts and situations. Nevertheless, this type of thinking is in its early stages, and any consolidation will take place in later years (at ages 16-20).

Ability to follow a line of reasoning or thought: He gradually becomes capable of following the development of a line of reasoning or thought, though without fully separating himself from the concrete world. The abstract gradually begins to establish itself. This means that the concrete world, while still present, may be momentarily set aside to make way for reasoning requiring less physical handling of objects, so that the child begins to react to more speculative statements.

Period of egocentrism: At this stage, the young adolescent may feel he is the centre of attraction. He believes he is being observed, watched. He may also feel threatened. He may experience successive bouts of anxiety. His sense of humor is not yet developed. In addition, any ridicule offends his sense of who he thinks he is.

Physical betrayal: Because the young adolescent is entering puberty, his body becomes foreign to him, betraying him with its outward signs of puberty. This traumatizes and amazes him, and makes him insecure. He is dominated by periods of ambivalence. At times, the young adolescent has difficulty recognizing himself.

Strong emotions: The onset of puberty marks the beginning of a period when emotions are close to the surface. At this age the adolescent may exhibit intense, immediate, unexpected and at times violent reactions, because of his difficulty in channelling a large number of new intellectual, physical and emotional potentialities.

Failure to make distinctions: Because he sometimes experiences violent emotions and is developing his ability to reason, the young adolescent is not always able to make a clear distinction between the emotional and the rational. He may confuse the two, leading to a distortion of reality for both himself and others and, consequently, to some difficulty in communicating. As a result, he has difficulty taking eventualities into account, particularly where he is directly concerned.

Lack of subtlety in thinking: For the same reasons, the young adolescent is very categorical and unyielding. He often makes sweeping generalizations and disregards niceties. His new ability to envisage all possibilities means that, in many situations, the adolescent prefers to subordinate the real to the possible (idealistic thinking), rather than the possible to the real (practical thinking).

Intensely sociable: The relationships between young adolescents are strengthened. This becomes very important. The gang or the crowd begins to take shape, prompting the young adolescent to be demanding of the others. He may be very critical of anyone not in his group. At the same time, he may become a "follower" and highly impressionable (social conformism).

Sense of freedom, independence: This is very characteristic of this period. His thinking tricks him into believing and feeling that he is ready to accept freedom and independence. But this is still an illusion. His conscience is not sufficiently developed, his freedom is obviously still limited. But he wants to make all of his own decisions, even those that are unwise or vague.

Begins to challenge authority: Though not yet rebellious, the young adolescent is beginning to challenge authority and to doubt its relevance and applicability. This creates inner conflict and could provoke confrontation. He wants to establish his own priorities without interference from others, but often is not yet capable of doing so. As a result, the young adolescent may feel strongly torn between values he has internalized from his parents and from society in general, and the values of his ego ideal, which is developing at this stage.

2. *Implications of these characteristics for the activities*

- The development education activities should gradually and steadily call for reasoned thinking.
- The activities should alternate between the abstract and the concrete. The young adolescent is able to follow the logical development of a talk or presentation. Forays should be made into the abstract and speculative.
- The activities should not be deeply distressing to the young adolescent. He is already anxious about his own bodily reality. Caution should therefore be used in any statements made.
- Any activity proposed to the young adolescent should contain parameters of reference points. The security they provide is needed at this age.

- The activities should, above all, make use of discussion rather than dogmatism. It should be kept in mind that at this age the young adolescent may become categorical. The activities should enable him to qualify his positions.
- The activities should help the young adolescent distinguish between the emotional and the rational.
- The activities should not be founded on categorical opposition to things or people. The issue of authority and power should be handled with consideration and subtlety, while keeping in mind that structure is still needed.
- Emphasize the usefulness of rules and conventions in governing relationships between individuals as well as societies. The activities should demonstrate the importance of sharing certain rights, privileges, responsibilities and resources in order to live in harmony with others. Participants should also be made aware of the need to respect differences when applying laws and rules.

III. Psychopedagogical characteristics of late adolescence (ages 16-20)

Note: Because considerable development takes place between the start and end of late adolescence, the psychopedagogical characteristics for ages 16 to 17 and for ages 18 to 20 are discussed separately.

A. Ages 16-17

1. Main characteristics

Establishment of formal thought: The process begun in the previous profile with respect to thought intensifies. The adolescent truly begins to reason, that is, to move beyond the concrete aspect of reality to direct his thinking (hypothetico-deductive reasoning). He is

therefore able to think in the abstract and develop lines of reasoning about propositions. He is also able to develop means of verifying his theories.

Ability to discuss with ease: Because of the above characteristic, the adolescent becomes very much at ease in discussion and readily exchanges views. He even believes his comments to be original and, at times, exhaustive. He is able to tolerate the dissent of others. At times, he attempts to impose his views and standpoints.

Very self-aware: Conscious of his ability to reason, the adolescent becomes far more aware of himself, his potential and his power. At times he feels himself more independent than he actually is. He takes pleasure in making discoveries on his own. He is going through a period of egocentrism, which may put him at odds with others; as a result, he is quick to notice the weaknesses of others, particularly adults.

Often believes he is invincible: At this stage, the adolescent often believes he is invincible. This belief is attributable to his new-found reasoning ability. He sees himself as a reformer; he believes he has the solutions to the problems of the world around him. He may therefore at times become impatient and have difficulty accepting criticism from others. He wants events to unfold rapidly.

Sense of morals based on universality: An awareness of individual rights manifests itself at this age. The adolescent realizes that values may be influenced by culture and personal opinions. In distinguishing right from wrong, the key factor is therefore compliance with the "social contracts" established freely between individuals. Gradually, this way of seeing things allows the adolescent to become aware of the inviolability of certain individual rights, and of the universality of certain ethical principles which he himself chooses. Right and wrong are then seen in terms of respect for human beings and the development of a personal conscience.

Instability: At this age, things develop very quickly. His body, his thinking, even his relationships are changing rapidly. This gives rise to periods of instability and ambivalence in the adolescent. He changes his ideas very quickly. He undergoes a number of categorical changes in a very brief period of time.

Grand ideals: It is not unusual to observe in the adolescent the formulation of unrealistic ideals and plans. This is consistent with the way he sees things. However, he fails to see how these plans and ideals are to fit in with his reality.

2. Implications of these characteristics for the activities

- As the adolescent is now capable of logical thinking, the development education activities should place considerable emphasis on discussion. Priority should be given to the exchange of ideas.
- The adolescent is someone in a hurry. In order to develop patience and intellectual rigor, the activities should not merely touch on topics and ideas. Some depth of discussion and debate is called for. The adolescent is now capable of this. The activities should also help the adolescent realize the import of these discussions. In other words, he should be encouraged to note implications, consequences and possibilities for turning his words into action.
- The activities should make the adolescent aware of his place in a broader, more complex whole. He should continually be confronted with the reality of situations and people.
- These activities should also make the adolescent aware of any discrepancy there might be between his personal ideals and everyday reality. If this reality is not his own, it may be that of someone else, such as a neighbor or friend.

- The activities should help the adolescent realize the importance of solidarity. No man is an island, and it is important at this age that the adolescent become eminently aware of this. As a result, his views will become less categorical.

B. Ages 18-20

1. *Main characteristics*

Intellectually at ease: Thinking is better established, better formulated. Reflection is serious and sustained and intellectual cooperation is easier. The adolescent knows how to compare, assess, measure. His thinking now enables him to see the implications and consequences of his actions. He is able to see the hidden motives of certain actions for what they are.

Ability to empathize: In his interventions, judgments and reasoning, he is able to take the views of others into account. He becomes more realistic, more level-headed, more critical. Fantasy gives way to reality. He becomes aware of his intellectual capabilities. He is better acquainted with his intellectual limitations and his abilities are seen in proper perspective.

Establishment of priorities: At this age, time becomes very important. The adolescent now knows that he must establish his priorities based on his abilities and limitations. His sights are on the future, prompting him to plan, to consider, to explore new avenues. He becomes very pragmatic in his viewpoints, judgments and orientations.

More acute sense of justice: Because he is becoming more realistic and pragmatic, he discovers he is to be treated justly and fairly. Others must respect him and hold him in high regard. He reacts strongly to certain injustices towards himself and others. Social justice at times becomes a line of reasoning he wants to pursue and defend. He may even undertake to defend a cause and fight to see justice done.

More developed social sense: Although he has become very aware of his priorities, at this stage the adolescent is well aware that he will have to live in society. It is up to him to ensure that this society is viable and that he finds his place in it. Therefore, he does not hesitate to make contacts and establish alliances that will serve him well in the future. He is eminently aware of the social role he will some day have to fulfil.

Attachments are clearly defined: At this stage, emotional and social attachments become precise and clearly defined, and are allowed to develop. This becomes very important, even a top priority. Options are considered, weighed and more clearly articulated. The more mature adolescent knows that choices have to be made and that these choices will affect his life and the lives of others.

2. Implications of these characteristics for the activities

- At this stage of development, the activities may prompt an awareness in the young adult of the main principles governing national and international politics.
- The activities may also prompt him to compare, evaluate and observe the functioning of the various social systems.
- The activities may fuel the desire of the more mature adolescent to take a stand and justify it.
- The activities may also call for the young adult to measure his satisfaction with what is occurring around him. He is capable of formulating an opinion in this regard.
- The activities should prompt him to increase his level of awareness and check his plans and ideals against the social, economic and geopolitical realities of the world. These activities should prompt him to take a stand.

- Participants in this age group have a better understanding of development values. Acceptance of differences, interdependence and solidarity among peoples are the universal principles on which the activities should focus. The activities may also be aimed at structuring these development values and establishing their priority in relation to other values. Situations which pose a moral dilemma may be useful starting points for such activities.

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